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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/16/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH SIMBA MAKONI

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) In an introductory meeting with the Ambassador on April 15, Simba Makoni floated the idea of a government of national unity (GNU). Makoni believes another election is unworkable. He presented the idea of a GNU to leaders at the Lusaka SADC Summit in the presence of MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai who opposed the proposal. Makoni requested the

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good offices of the Ambassador in trying to sell his idea to Tsvangirai, but acknowledged this would be difficult. Makoni

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said he was more than willing to meet with Tsvangirai but was skeptical of a positive outcome because of the influence of Tsvangirai's advisors. The Ambassador said he would speak to

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Tsvangirai. While we believe there is little or no chance

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that Tsvangirai will buy into Makoni's plan, the Ambassador will attempt to facilitate a meeting between the two as a possible prelude to a common strategy. Makoni also discussed electoral fraud. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) During the election campaign, Makoni, who was attacked by ZANU-PF and the government media as a stooge of the West, avoided western diplomats. This was the Ambassador's first meeting with Makoni, who clearly realizes the importance of engagement with the West.

Current State of Play

13. (C) Makoni said that ZANU-PF was now preparing for either a rerun of the election or a runoff. It preferred a rerun, as Makoni would also be a candidate and, in ZANU-PF's view, would take more votes from Tsvangirai than Mugabe. ZANU-PF would try to get Makoni to drop out and support Mugabe; Makoni said there was no chance of this happening.

14. (C) Makoni opined that Tsvangirai believed he had won the election by himself and did not need to work with anyone else. Tsvangirai thought he could win a runoff (presumably with a relatively level playing field) by taking some votes from Mugabe and some from voters who supported Makoni in the first round.

15. (C) While Makoni thought the most likely scenarios at this point in time were either a rerun or runoff, he thought a new paradigm was needed. At present, neither party had a workable parliamentary majority; hence there would be a "hung" parliament. Most Zimbabweans wanted ZANU-PF and the MDC to work together. The country could not financially afford another election. Another campaign would further cripple the economy. People would become more stressed. Government paralysis would continue; food was about to run out and there were no plans to bring in more. And violence would continue.

Makoni's Proposal for a GNU

16. (C) Makoni suggested to the Ambassador that to save the country from these ills and normalize the country a GNU should be established. It would have a life of two to three years, would gradually remove Mugabe from office, and would adopt a new constitution. The MDC, which was based solely on an anti-Mugabe stance, could reposition and adopt positive policies. Makoni said he had approached (unnamed) ZANU-PF interlocutors and they were agreeable; he thought Mugabe would be as well.

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17. (C) Makoni stated he had made his proposal of a GNU to leaders at the Lusaka SADC Summit in the presence of Tsvangirai. Tsvangirai expressed opposition to the idea and

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was upset that Makoni had not briefed him first. Makoni said he had tried to see Tsvangirai before the summit, but Tsvangirai had not been in Harare.

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18. (C) The country did not want either Mugabe or Tsvangirai as its president, according to Makoni. He thought ZNU-PF might accept him as the head of a GNU, but Tsvangirai would probably not. He was willing to try to mediate between the MDC and ZANU-PF, even though such a role would eliminate him as a potential leader. Alternatively, the parties could look for another mediator, and he would continue to be a player.

19. (C) At Makoni's request, the Ambassador agreed to discuss Makoni's proposal with Tsvangirai and, if possible, to arrange a meeting between the two.

On Election Fraud

110. (C) Makoni said that two weeks ago he went to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to pursue his rights under the Electoral Act and observe counting of presidential votes. The chairman of the ZEC, George Chiweshe, and the Chief Electoral Officer, Lovemore Sekeremayi (son of the Minister of Defense) refused to allow him to do so; they told

him his presence would be distracting and intimidating. Less than 24 hours later, according to Makoni, the ZEC decamped from its headquarters and moved to an undisclosed location.

¶11. (C) ZANU-PF, said Makoni, was working to reverse the parliamentary results in order to gain a majority and to change the actual presidential vote. This would not be acceptable, however, to Zimbabweans, SADC, and the international community. Makoni added that recounting could not be done since there had been no chain of custody of ballot boxes and tabulation had not been done in the presence of the parties.

Willing to Meet with MDC

¶12. (C) Makoni ended the meeting by reiterating that he was willing to meet anytime, anywhere with Tsvangirai. He was flexible and he hoped Tsvangirai would be as well. He thought, however, that Tsvangirai was too much under the influence of advisors Strive Masiyiwa, Roy Bennett and Melinda Ferris, and that therefore negotiations would be difficult.

COMMENT

¶13. (C) We believe there is no chance that the MDC will buy into Makoni's plan. Nor should it agree to any plan that allows Mugabe to remain in power. But the Ambassador will attempt to facilitate a Tsvangirai-Makoni meeting. As two elements of the opposition, it is important that they talk.
END COMMENT.

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